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ABSTRACT

Designed to assist community college planners develop a vision of learning in the emerging Knowledge Age, this booklet introduces a set of principles for using revolutionary vision to stimulate action and discusses how community colleges can apply these principles in strategic planning. Following a discussion of the characteristics of the new economy and the Knowledge Age, the booklet provides a series of metaphors that lay the foundation for planning in the Knowledge Age, including the fusion of learning with work and recreation, perpetual learning, distributed learning, interactivity, and knowledge sharing. The following set of planning activities are then described: (1) engage in strategic thinking and planning, highlighting the need to plan from the future backward and six principles of strategic thinking; (2) identify barriers to achieving the vision and strategies for overcoming them, such as launching new initiatives, redirecting existing processes, reallocating resources, and identifying new resources; (3) implement the vision aggressively but incrementally while skills are being developed; (4) while new programs are being implemented, build basic competencies for the knowledge age related to leadership skills, new academic cultures, technological skills, new learning tools, enhanced alliances, and new financial paradigms; and (5) seize special opportunities to effectively compete with other learning providers. Contains 10 references. (TGI)

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Creating a Knowledge Age Vision for Your Community College

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Creating a Knowledge Age Vision for Your Community College

Donald M. Norris and Susan E. Poulton

AACC
American Association of Community Colleges, Washington DC, 1997

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Poised on the Threshold of the Knowledge Age

A Revolutionary Vision

This booklet is about generating a revolutionary vision of the future of learning in the Knowledge Age to drive strategic planning and change at your community college. Vision alone is insufficient to shape the transformation of your community college to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

The magnitude of the changes required to fulfill a revolutionary vision can potentially traumatize and immobilize the campus community. It can even awaken the forces of resistance. We have developed a set of principles for using revolutionary vision to overcome inertia and stimulate action, resulting in assured migration paths to the Knowledge Age.

This booklet will discuss those principles and how you can apply them to challenge your community college and encourage your faculty, staff, administration, and stakeholders to move forward into the Knowledge Age.

The New Economy

Let us begin by understanding the magnitude of the challenges and opportunities facing community colleges and the power of the emerging vision for learning in the 21st century.

In many ways, the '90s are the first decade of the 21st century. We truly are on the threshold of a new age. The world is changing faster and more fundamentally than ever before, driven by the emergence of the new, global, knowledge-driven economy.

The New Economy displays the following characteristics:

Knowledge Driven: The coin of the realm is knowledge, not information. Insight, synthesis, and judgment are the real sources of value.

Communication Age, not Information Age: Communicating is the way of the New Economy. Hoarding information is out. Sharing and leveraging knowledge is in.

Global: The New Economy spans every political and organizational jurisdiction. Knowledge, financial capital, and other assets flow easily across borders. Protected markets, safe franchises, and monopolies disappear.

Accelerating Pace of Change: The New Economy is characterized by rapidly accelerating change. Life cycles get shorter and customers expect increasingly customized service.

Changing Technology and Organizational Structures: In the Knowledge Age, technology will finally be seamless and coherent. This will enable us to fuse activities and to create network organizations that are fast and flexible.

The Knowledge Age . . . An "Age of Learning"

Perpetual Learning

The Knowledge Age will be an "Age of Learning," and learning will be fused with work, recreation, edutainment, personal development, and even the expression of spirituality.

Fusion of learning with work, recreation, and other activities

Time-out for learning

Knowledge Age citizens will learn every day throughout long and productive lives. They will learn anywhere, anytime, and just-in-time. The learner will no longer be isolated but through technology will learn in collaboration with others.

Knowledge Age learners will use physical learning resources as gateways to virtual learning resources. These physical learning places will be everywhere:

- Desktops and laptops
- Classrooms and boardrooms
- Academic malls and union halls
- Community learning centers and homes of mentors

The adjectives *continuing* and *lifelong* are inadequate to describe this Knowledge Age learning that will be so fundamentally fused into our lives.

Three adjectives capture the essence of 21st-century learning:

PERPETUAL

DISTRIBUTED

INTERACTIVE

Perpetual: Knowledge Age learning will be perpetual because it will be fused with work and other activities and will occur all the time and again and again. Perpetual learning will generate its own momentum and repetition.

Distributed: Learning will be distributed by linking learners in every physical space with a pervasive atmosphere of virtual (on-line) learning resources.

physical + virtual =
distributed learning

Interactive: Knowledge Age learning will be interactive because interactivity will replace educational delivery as the metaphor for learning.

Traditional learning will plateau, or even decline, in the Knowledge Age. Learning enterprises that successfully address the need for perpetual, distributed, interactive learning will experience substantial growth in the 21st century, in spite of fierce competition.

Principles for Using a Knowledge Age Vision for Community Colleges

New Metaphors for the Knowledge Age

Information Age	*Knowledge Age*
Time-Out for Learning	*Fusion of Learning with Work and Recreation*
Lifelong Learning	*Perpetual Learning*
Physical/Virtual Learning	*Distributed Learning*
Educational Delivery	*Interactivity*
Information Hoarding	*Knowledge Sharing*

During periods of fundamental change, symbols and metaphors are powerful instruments. The jump-shift from the present to Knowledge Age learning is shaped by a new set of metaphors that more adequately represent the promise of the Knowledge Age.

These metaphors help us to see the future with different eyes. They lay the foundation of principles for using a Knowledge Age vision to guide learning institutions. Even our planning actions should symbolize the nature of our journey into the uncertain future.

Guiding Your Community College Toward the Future

Community colleges can be guided by visions of learning in the Knowledge Age if they deploy the following sets of planning activities:

- Think strategically for the Knowledge Age
- "Make the blue sky meet the road"
- Chart assured migration paths to the Knowledge Age
- Build basic competencies for the Knowledge Age
- Seize special opportunities for your community college

Don't hesitate. Your journey can start today.

Think Strategically for the Knowledge Age

Planning from the Future Backward

During periods of fundamental change, the future cannot be understood by simply extrapolating the present forward. We must plan from the future backward. This is the essence of true strategic thinking.

Some aspects of the new economy and emerging opportunities are readily apparent in today's world, but many of today's leading indicators are misleading. Colleges have digitized existing practices, rather than using technology to do things differently. Five years from now, technology will have enabled us to fuse activities and function differently.

Colleges are on the "misleading leading edge" of the Knowledge Age. We must proceed carefully. Don't be confused by today's images. Look to the future for guidance.

Characteristics of the Misleading Leading Edge

It's difficult to believe that seamless technology and fused activities are imminent when today's learning and work environments display the following characteristics:

- "Glitchy" technology is neither seamless nor coherent and is not yet supportive of the fusion of activities.
- Learning products, services, and interactions are not up to Knowledge Age standards of timeliness, mass customization, and convenience.
- Organizational structures and processes are continuations or modifications of traditional forms.

These characteristics are perpetuated by the tendency of educators to apply information technology tools in predictable ways.

Typical Actions Taken by Educators on the Misleading Leading Edge

The first impulse is to use technology to improve familiar forms and practices:

- Develop on-line versions of existing teaching materials. Create the virtual college or university.
- Place a silicon veneer over the organizational culture.
- Practice "raging incrementalism," unchallenged by genuinely new vision.
- Fail to appreciate the full new range of learning competitors in the Knowledge Age.

Colleges and universities must use visions and strategies that vault beyond the misleading leading edge to prepare for learning in the Knowledge Age.

Principles of Strategic Thinking

In his article "Strategy as Revolution," Gary Hamel suggests strategic principles for times of fundamental change.

Put the strategic back in strategic planning: Most strategic planning is about incrementalism, exploring from today forward rather than from the future backward. It fails to consider the full range of alternatives to current learning and financial paradigms.

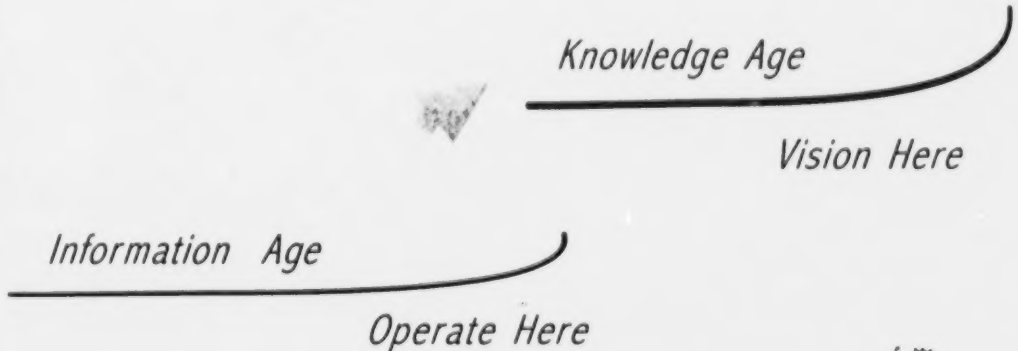
Question the basic assumptions of the higher learning industry: Question the assumptions of higher learning and be subversive. Question the form while preserving the essence of academic culture. Anyone can be a strategy activist and make a meaningful contribution, so engage and empower the "believable revolutionaries" in your institution.

Eliminate the bottleneck at the top: The leadership pyramid is an Industrial Age artifact. Some administrators are less in touch with students, less diverse, and less in tune with the patterns and cadences of the Knowledge Age. Often, planning needs more diversity, more youth, and more experts on nontraditional learning.

Perspective is worth 50 IQ points: Creative innovation is not possible without a perspective that appreciates the potential of Knowledge Age learning. Regrinding the lens through which the organization views the future will sharpen everyone's sight.

Make strategy setting more participatory: Strategy setting must involve a broad cross section of the organization. Participatory strategy enables more people to comment on visions, strategies, and scenarios for the future.

You cannot see the end from the beginning: Planning for the future is like trying to see around the curvature of the earth. Knowledge Age planning is less about reaching predetermined destinations and more about navigation through uncertain waters. Navigation is helped by planning from the future backward.



Engage in Strategic Thinking

How do you interject genuine strategic thinking into your campus planning process? The answer is simple: Just do it. Convene a small group of your best thinkers and craft alternative visions for the future of your community college in the Knowledge Age.

Challenge these thinkers to "jump the curve" to a new vision plane. Capture a number of possibilities, including continuation of the status quo. Don't forget to recognize the impact of potential collaborators/competitors including: direct school-to-work initiatives between secondary schools and employers, aggressive commercial learning providers, virtual learning options, corporate training programs, and local colleges and universities hungry for new students.

Most academic planning processes begin by deconstructing the future into components and debating those components for six months. Then when they reconstruct the beast, they find that it is not an elephant, as they hoped, but a camel!

Take the opposite approach. Discuss alternative forms the future may take, then rapidly construct alternative scenarios and subject the entire scenario to scrutiny by the planning group. Don't stop there: Involve broad cross sections of the college community in dialogue on the future visions and change the visions as new perspectives emerge.

Participatory Strategic Planning

Place the scenarios on a Web site and invite the entire campus community to comment. You will be surprised by the comments and insights you receive. Good ideas will emerge on both the visions of the future and the possible strategies to address those visions.

Once you have visions of the future, you can gauge their impacts on the college and include those impacts in your regular strategic planning activities. Continue to provide members of the campus community with the opportunity to comment on visions and strategies. Periodically hold open forums on future visions and the campus strategies. Stage conversations with faculty groups, administrative staff, students, and community stakeholders.

Treat the vision and strategies as continuously changing in response to the changing environment. Underline this perpetual state of change by posting campus visions, strategies, and plans on campus Web sites.

Use this booklet to shape the perspectives of groups participating in these dialogues. Focus on your Board as they need to grow different perspectives on the future.

"Making the Blue Sky Meet the Road"

Ripping Back to the Present

Now that you have used strategic thinking to create visions of the Knowledge Age, it's time to plan from the future backward. Rip those visions back to the present to identify barriers to moving your community college toward the Knowledge Age future. Then develop strategies for overcoming these barriers. This process is called "making the blue sky meet the road," a phrase that was used derisively at Bell Labs to define a person who was stuck in the middle between being a "blue sky," and a "rubber meets the road" person. As we approach the future, we all need to function in this space between the blue sky and the road.

This involves challenging the basic assumptions of the learning industry, including the traditional role differentiations between community colleges and four-year institutions. We must overcome the inertia of existing paradigms.

Moving toward your Knowledge Age vision involves launching new initiatives and redirecting existing processes. Indeed, the most powerful impacts can be realized by realigning your planning; product and program development; facilities planning; and program review to your emerging visions. This will enable you to reallocate existing resources and find new pools of resources to deploy in building your competencies for Knowledge Age learning.

The leap from the present to the Knowledge Age is substantial. It is a journey that will take five or 10 years, even more. Many new technologies and tools will be developed during that time. To plan for this journey requires an approach to planning that recognizes the uncertainty of the task.

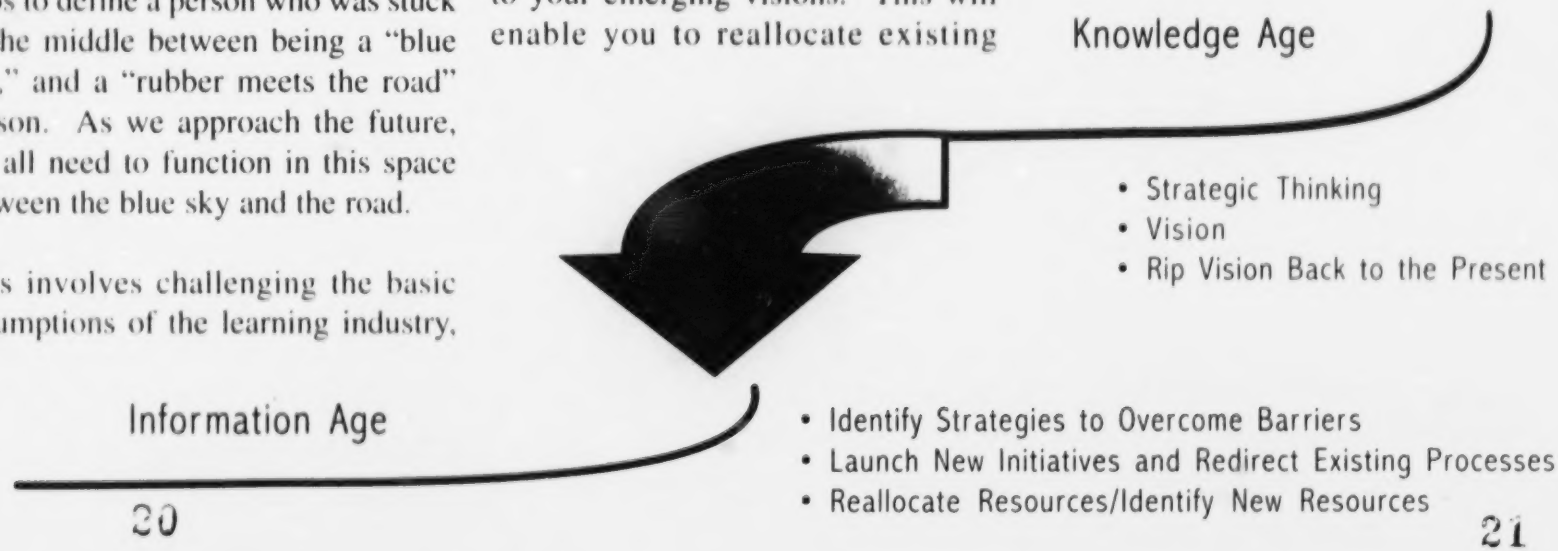


Chart Assured Migration Paths to the Knowledge Age

New Approaches to Planning

The Knowledge Age planner must deploy a different tool kit suitable to the new age. Our approaches to the Knowledge Age must fit the pace, standards, and rhythms of this era of great uncertainty.

New Adjectives for Planning in the Knowledge Age

Perpetual

White-water

Multifaceted

Broad-based, participatory

Positioning

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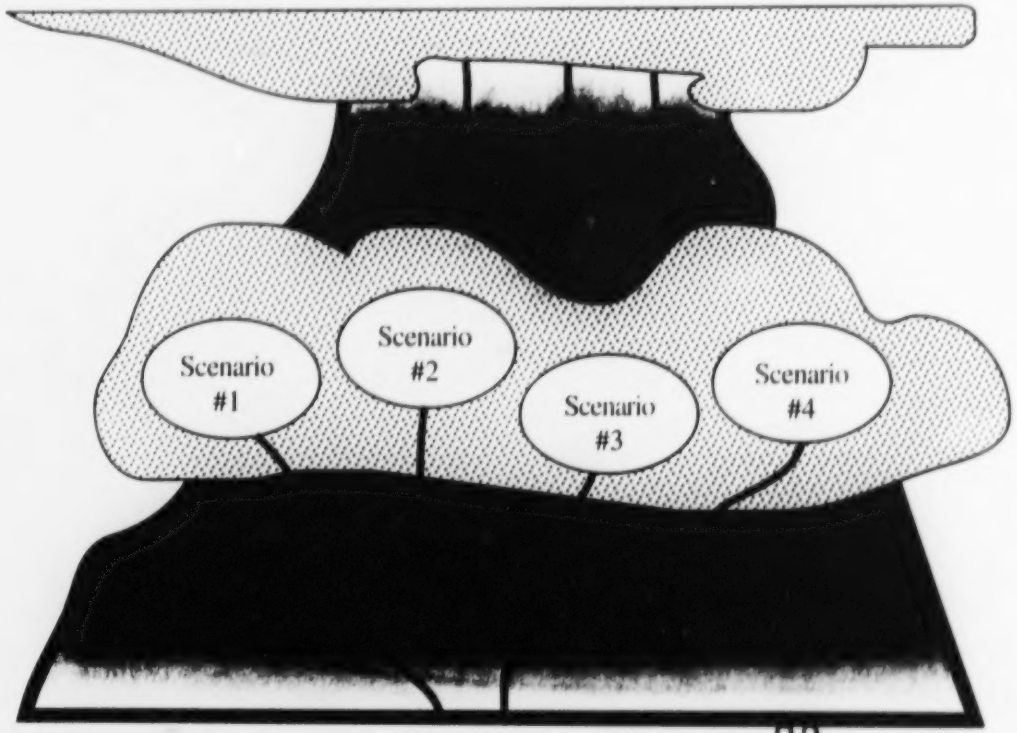
Prepare to Be Successful in Any Alternative Future

Planning in the Knowledge Age is like climbing a mountain whose top is shrouded in mist. You have to move up into the misty uncertainty, positioning yourself for the next step, and avoid taking a dead-end trail. Occasionally when the mist clears, you realize that this mountain has no peak and that planning for and navigating into the Knowledge Age is a perpetual process.



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Assured Migration Paths

Assured migration paths are needed to prepare our community colleges to be successful under a number of future scenarios. You must recognize that during the transition to the Knowledge Age, different scenarios can, and will, exist at the same time. Traditional learning will not disappear in the Knowledge Age. A diversity of learning futures will exist.

Examples of Multiple Learning Futures

Scenario #1: Traditional on-campus courses, certificates, and degrees technologically enhanced.

Scenario #2: Virtual variations on traditional offerings, including distance learning and virtual learning services.

Scenario #3: Distributed learning, combining physical and virtual.

Scenario #4: Transformational learning—perpetual, distributed, interactive learning; new approaches to mastery:

- Desktop learning, fused with work and other activities
- New, mass-customized learning experiences tailored to every individual learner
- Competency-based certification of mastery
- "Unbundled" learning and certification of mastery

Revolutionary Vision, Evolutionary Action

One of the ironies of Knowledge Age planning is the need to mix revolutionary vision with incremental action until basic competencies are developed.

These competencies will enable decisive action on future academic opportunities as they become more clear and the state-of-the-art Knowledge Age learning tools advances.

But these incremental actions will be guided by revolutionary vision and strategy. They will be more purposeful, commit greater resources, and position the institution far more effectively than our normal habits of raging incrementalism, which are unguided by future vision.

When guided by revolutionary vision and strategy, community colleges can launch aggressive, evolutionary actions that will develop assured migration paths and position the college for even more decisive action in the future.

Revolutionary Vision → Evolutionary Action → Build Competencies

Develop Expeditionary "Sticky" Academic Programs

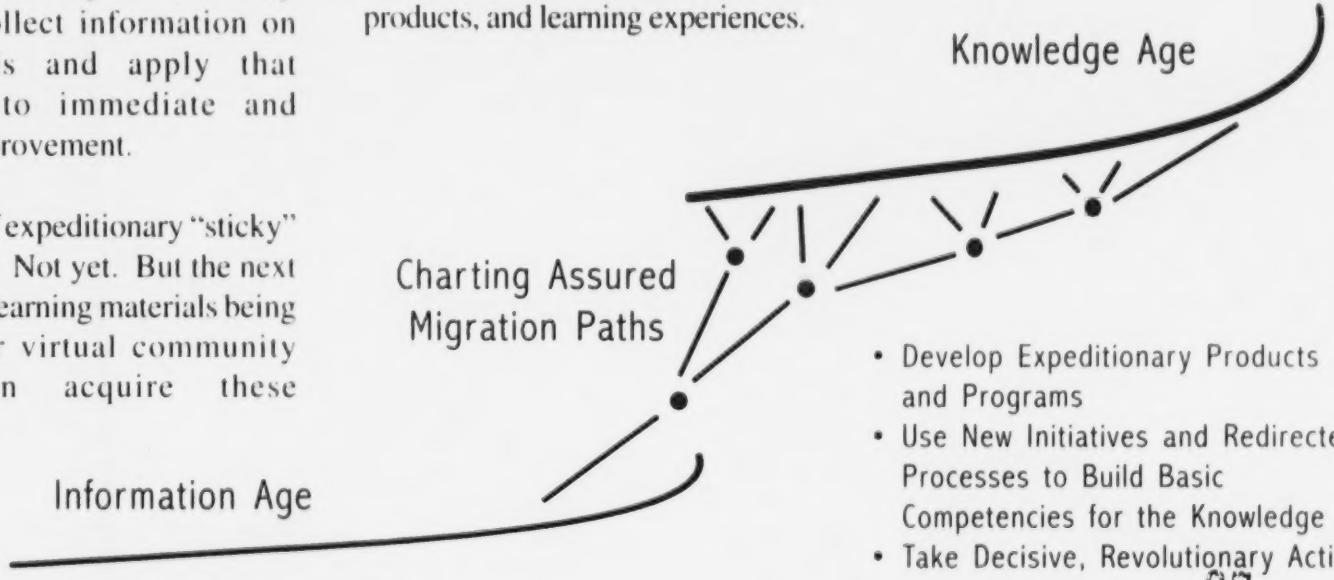
A key element of building assured migration paths is deploying expeditionary program and product development. This involves rapid prototypes of new academic programs and experiences.

These rapid prototypes are characterized as "sticky" because they are able to collect information on learner needs and apply that information to immediate and continuous improvement.

Do examples of expeditionary "sticky" products exist? Not yet. But the next generations of learning materials being developed for virtual community colleges can acquire these characteristics.

Summary of Strategic Thinking and Assured Migration Paths

- Develop revolutionary visions and future scenarios.
- Rip those visions back to the present to overcome barriers, redirect existing processes, and launch new initiatives.
- Proceed aggressively but incrementally, using expeditionary "sticky" programs, products, and learning experiences.
- Through these initiatives, develop the basic competencies for Knowledge Age products, services, and interactivity.
- Take revolutionary action when advisable, preferably with strategic allies.



Build Basic Competencies for the Knowledge Age

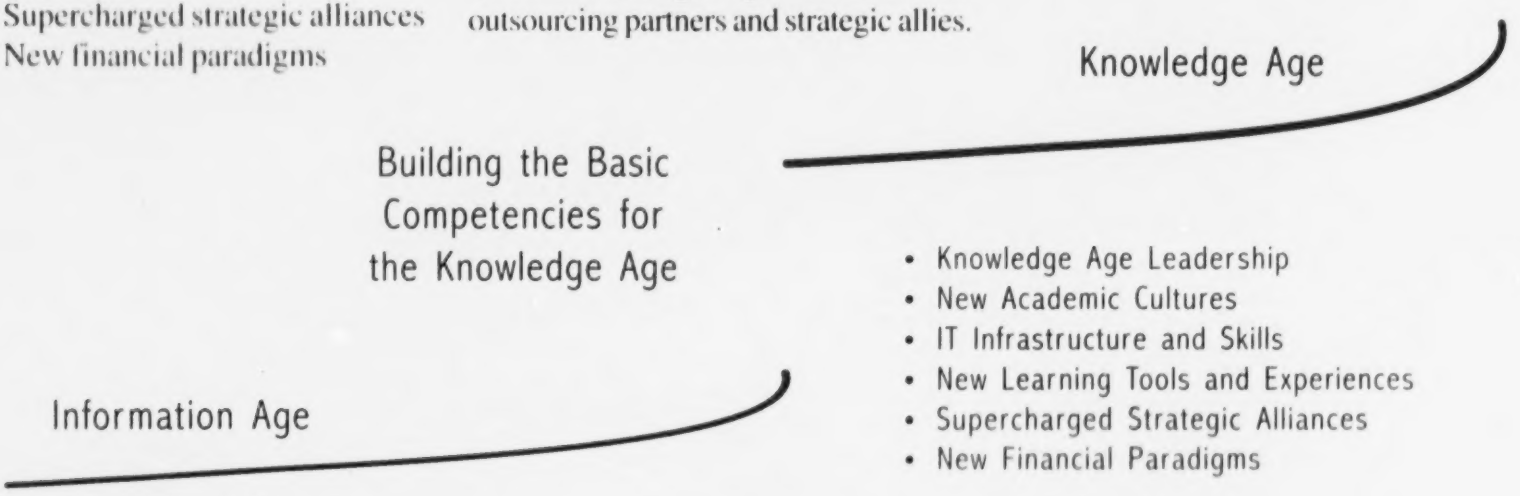
Developing Basic Competencies

Successful Knowledge Age community colleges will have developed a set of basic competencies, including:

- A new breed of leadership, vision, and strategy
- New academic cultures
- Information technology infrastructure and skills
- New learning tools and experiences
- Supercharged strategic alliances
- New financial paradigms

Many of these basic competencies can be acquired through strategic alliances with other learning providers, technology companies, and employers that will rely on community colleges as learning agents and learning brokers. Indeed, the most successful community colleges follow a two-part strategy: 1) focus their energies on honing their **core competencies,** those attributes that differentiate them from competitors, and 2) learn or acquire the other **basic competencies** needed to serve Knowledge Age learners from outsourcing partners and strategic allies.

The most unsuccessful community colleges will be those who listen to the false counsel "We should only do those few things that we do well ourselves and ignore everything else." In other words, "Let's do only those things at which we are currently competent." It opens the door to other competitors who have a keener sense of how learners' needs are changing. Choosing comfort over challenge will serve neither your college nor your community well.



A New Breed of Leadership, Vision, and Strategy

Community college leadership must be capable of stimulating institution-wide dialogues on transformation and change. When confronted with uncertainty, many members of the campus community will hunger for a strong leader who can predict the future and chart their course.

Strong leadership is needed, but not of that type. Campus leaders must engage the college community in an ongoing dialogue about the future, share different visions, nurture the upward percolation of good ideas, and build the capacity to create expeditionary products to Knowledge Age standards of timeliness, mass customization, responsiveness, coherence, and convenience.

Strategic thinking and vision are key parts of this. We need institutional leaders who are much better at nurturing dialogues on campus and at raising the perspective of the Board. Our notion of leadership must extend beyond the upper reaches of the organizational pyramid to include faculty and staff who are in touch with emerging needs of Knowledge Age learners.

Leadership will also be required to redirect existing processes of planning, product development, governance, and services. It isn't necessary to launch a thousand new initiatives, although some may be helpful. What campuses really need to do is redirect all existing processes driven by that revolutionary vision. You will find that over a few years' time, even a course adjustment of just a few degrees in your existing products and initiatives, based on revolutionary vision, will create a tremendous change in positioning your campus for the Knowledge Age.

Preparing for the Knowledge Age requires new strategy setting that is broad-based, participatory, and empowers action and initiative. A consensual culture that enables any individual to exercise a veto must be replaced with a consensus on the need to do things differently. It is time to redirect existing processes and roll out new initiatives, and support people with Knowledge Age competencies. We must "water where the grass is green."

Many community colleges are crafting Knowledge Age visions to challenge their campuses and mobilize resources. Maricopa Community College's aggressive leadership has leveraged vision and resources of its multicampus system in creating distributed learning opportunities. Mount Royal College in Calgary has conducted broadly participatory dialogues on the Knowledge Age future involving campus and community stakeholders.

New Academic Cultures

Changing the academic culture is very important. But we can neither do it overnight nor include the whole organization at once.

Changing your entire organizational culture typically creates a change initiative that is a mile wide and three inches deep. We need focused, cultural change. Campus leadership must discover how to create organizational places where they can create expeditionary, responsive, timely, and customizable products. When these are successful, leadership must transfer that new cultural DNA to other parts of the organization, including traditional degree programs.

Knowledge Age Standards

Mass Customization
Timeliness
Responsiveness
Coherence
Convenience

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Somewhere in our community college we need to create a "skunk works," a place where we can experiment and create new academic cultures. Sometimes this can be achieved within an existing creative academic unit or program.

A continuing education unit can also serve as the foundation for creating a place where we can experiment with programs and achieve rapid curricular change without a three-year curricular design process. The virtual community college initiatives are another mechanism for creating new academic cultures for the Knowledge Age.

New cultures must be separated from traditional campus governance. They must be able to create rapid prototype products that are continuously adjusting to new conditions. Basing these learning experiences on demonstrated competency is one mechanism for focusing faculty attention on the certification of competency, rather than on the governance and approval process.

Academic and administrative processes, cultures, and offerings must be fused. The division between academic and administrative doesn't make any sense anymore in a world in which our operating systems, technology systems, and activities will be fused together.

New academic cultures have been created by community colleges as they have moved into virtual learning. Examples include Rio Salado College, Arizona Learning Systems, Colorado Electronic Community College, and Michigan Virtual Learning Services Network. Also, many community colleges are establishing learning agent/broker relationships with local companies, large and small, through which they are customizing learning experiences.

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Information Technology Infrastructure and Skills

The creation of an Information Technology (IT) infrastructure and development of IT skills of faculty, staff, and students are fundamental competencies of the successful Knowledge Age community college. But the IT environment of the Knowledge Age will be very different from today's.

Fragmented, proprietary systems are being replaced by seamless, fused, and open systems. The computer's role as a learning tool will be superseded by the view that the network is the learning environment, even for students in traditional, physical learning settings. The concept of IT as an expert-driven enterprise, performed by people for whom IT is their job, will be replaced by the concept of IT as end user-driven, engaged in by people for whom IT is a means to do their jobs better and differently.

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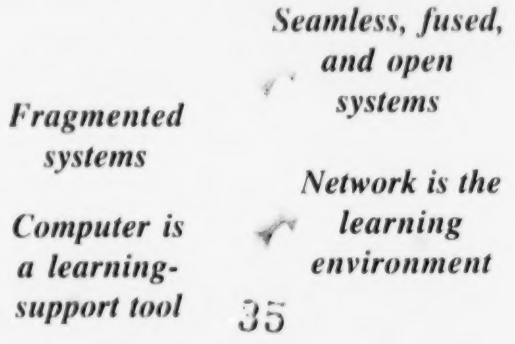
Fusion of systems and activities will be key, especially fusion of academic and administrative applications. The separation of these applications can no longer be tolerated. Many colleges are using Web sites and Web site-driven applications on top of their legacy systems to fuse their existing academic and administrative functions and systems without having to completely replace them.

We have to create a new generation of strongly Web-based information technology systems that can achieve these things. If your campus hasn't explored smart card applications and digital cash, they are going to be in your future.

One of the key ingredients of the use of technology are the skills of faculty, staff, and other stakeholders. The initiatives to raise these skill sets are critical.

Many community colleges have developed world-class IT infrastructures and skills among their faculty, staff, students, and even other stakeholders. Maricopa Community College, Miami-Dade Community College, and Sinclair Community College are recognized as leaders in these developments. Maricopa has just designed a new generation of student information systems with exciting potential to use student portfolios and other mechanisms to serve the learning measurement and management needs of Knowledge Age learners.

Information Technology in the Knowledge Age



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New Learning Tools and Experiences

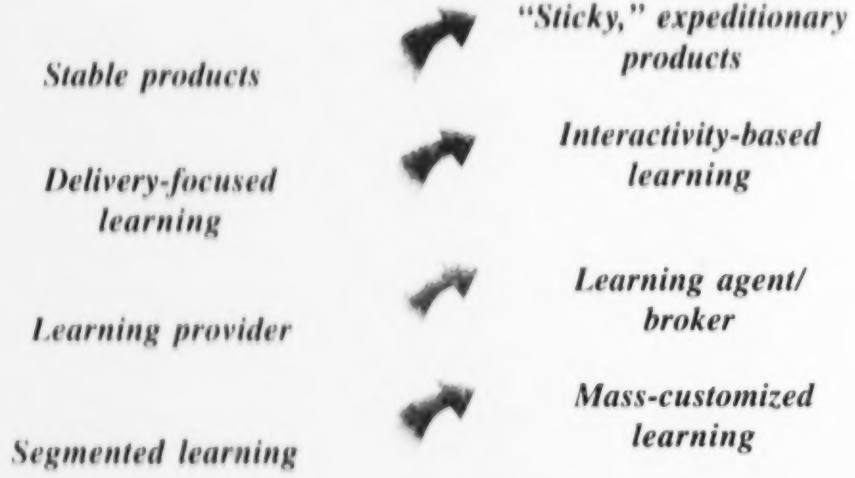
Product development and enhancement processes that function to Knowledge Age standards of customization, convenience, and timeliness are key to a community college's success in the Knowledge Age.

We need to build "sticky," expeditionary products and move into a mass-customized learning environment. Community colleges can serve as learning brokers and learning agents for businesses large and small, other organizations, communities of reflective practice in your communities, and individual learners.

Community colleges, continuing education units of universities, and metropolitan universities can serve as learning brokers and add value by being able to assess and deliver learning experiences tailored to the needs of individuals and/or organizations in your communities. Once established, it will be difficult for large, remote, virtual providers to assault a successful learning broker. Other kinds of learning providers may be able to compete with community colleges, but not at the same level of connection to the community.

The emerging virtual community colleges are excellent examples of new tools and learning experiences that are gestating in leading-edge community colleges today. Arizona Learning Systems is an interesting example that integrates virtual learning services into the existing organizational structures of every Arizona community college. Its offerings will be competency based and learner driven.

New Learning Tools and Experiences



Supercharged Strategic Alliances

Community colleges have traditionally forged partnerships with other community colleges and four-year institutions to jointly develop academic programs and meet other objectives. None of these partnerships can compare with the new breed of strategic alliances that will be forged by community colleges in the Knowledge Age.

Community colleges will be the lead partner in ambitious, multifaceted strategic alliances to meet the learning opportunities of the Knowledge Age. These alliances will involve new partners—technology providers and commercial learning providers. Community colleges will serve as learning brokers for the offerings of proprietary learning providers and four-year institutions under the provisions of these arrangements.

These strategic alliances are critical for several reasons. First, they provide a mechanism for accessing basic competencies that are needed to meet the needs of Knowledge Age learners. Second, these alliances provide a level of financial, technological, and process resources needed to develop new learning infrastructures and capabilities. Third, community colleges can work with local companies and communities of reflective practitioners (unions, professional groups, philanthropies) to develop learning materials, using the learner base of these allies to mitigate the risk of establishing expeditionary programs.

Community colleges are using these alliances today to erode the normal distinctions between community colleges and "senior" institutions. They are creating virtual offerings that are reaching not only beyond district boundaries but beyond regional and national boundaries as well. These alliances are being employed in the virtual community college projects and in major initiatives undertaken by the League for Innovation in Community Colleges.

Supercharged Strategic Alliances

Simple, collaborative financial alliances	*Complex, multifaceted alliances*
Traditional allies	*New alliances with technology and learning providers*
Philanthropy, joint development	*Investment in new products and services*
Financial support	*Mitigate risk, acquire competencies*

New Financial Paradigms

Finally, we need a new financial paradigm for product development that follows an investment model. We need to generate new sources of revenues, new markets, and new venture partners.

Create investment pools from the margins and revenues that are being generated from your nontraditional or extended learning offerings. Invest that money immediately in new product development, in developing Knowledge Age competencies, and in positioning your college to serve expanded roles in your communities.

Develop the capacity to use on-line payment for intellectual property, interactivity, and certification of mastery. These competencies will pay off in the Knowledge Age.

We need to leverage faculty time and activities dramatically. Find out who the faculty are on your campus who can work with your "skunk works" in developing "sticky" programs and leverage their time by making instructional development staff and student help available to them.

Use venture partners; share your margin with them and mitigate your risk. Deploy these mechanisms in your community to move forward into the Knowledge Age to acquire basic competencies. The building of each of these competencies will be the hallmark of the successful Knowledge Age learning enterprise.

The investment in virtual community colleges product development is a demonstration of the sort of new financial investment necessary to develop Knowledge Age learning experiences.

New Financial Paradigms

Products developed through sweat equity	*Investment model*
Squeeze additional revenues from existing sources	*New sources of revenues, new markets, new venture partners*
Front-end lump sum payment	*On-line payment based on value*
Cottage industry approach to new programs	*Leverage faculty time, team approach to development*

Seize the Special Opportunities for Community Colleges

Community Colleges as Community Learning Centers for Knowledge Age Learning

Where do community colleges fit into the ecology of Knowledge Age learning enterprises? Put simply, they are the community centers for Knowledge Age Learning. Four roles fit that description.

• ***"Great, good places" for learning.*** Learning will not occur alone. It will be fused with other social activities, including day care, medical services, social services, retail, and library. George Mason University has created an academic mall/university center. This building was funded by combining the capital budgets for a student union and an academic building. It now serves as a fused-use facility, where one can learn, work, recreate, and even express one's spirituality. All of this takes place in what is essentially a community learning center. Many community colleges are beginning to transform into these learning centers.

• ***Retrofitting the entire community for Knowledge Age learning skills.*** We can't afford to leave any one in our communities behind, technologically. All community learning places will be equipped to train community members in skills that are necessary to succeed in the new economy.

• ***Physical learning resources as the gateway to distributed learning resources.*** Five years from now, even traditional learners will not be comfortable with learning that is merely lecture. They will require learning that is strongly augmented by a distributed learning experience, giving them the knowledge navigation tools so they can pull virtual learning resources into the physical. Community learning centers will be physical gateways to virtual community colleges and universities.

• ***Learning brokers/agents for local businesses and community organizations.*** Community colleges can be the learning brokers for all levels of learning. They can broker their own offerings and those of other institutions. They will serve a wide clientele of community and commercial organizations.

Community Colleges will face heightened competition from all fronts: virtual offerings from traditional colleges and universities, school-to-work initiatives between secondary schools and businesses, and distributed programs from new learning providers. But they are well positioned to reap growth opportunities in the Knowledge Age.

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Community Colleges and Smart Communities

Is Your Community Prepared for the 21st Century?

Knowledge Age developments will separate communities into several different categories. Those communities that are effectively able to assess their weaknesses, develop a clear view of their position in the global economy, and adapt their community's skills and infrastructure will attain the status of ***Smart Community***. Smart communities will be the most supportive environment for facilitating the transformation from community college to community learning center.

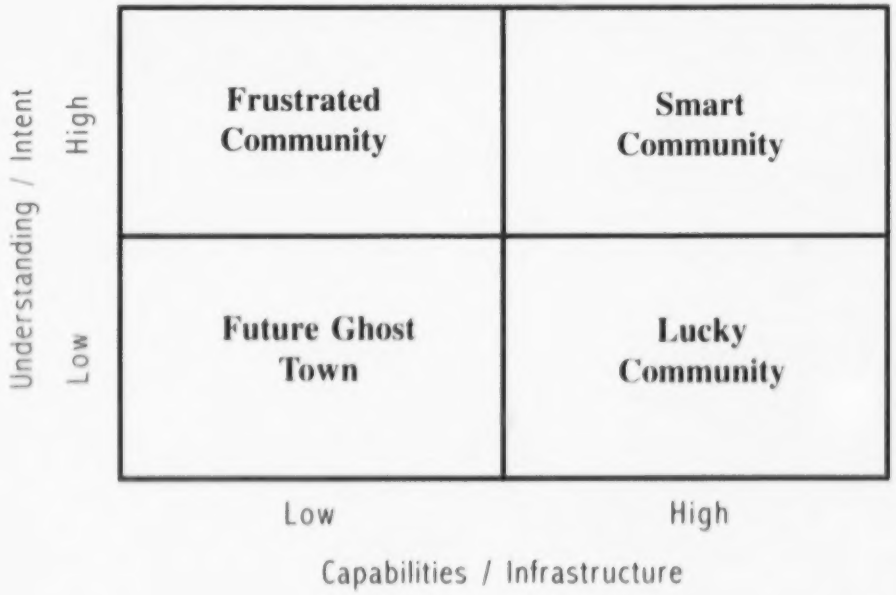
Other paths that communities can take include:

Frustrated Community: A community that has the vision and leadership to leverage its core competencies but lacks the technical and organizational infrastructure to facilitate growth in the new economy.

Lucky Community: Has the technical infrastructure and the skilled workforce that enables it to succeed in the new economy, but lacks an understanding of the trends and opportunities presented by the Knowledge Age.

Future Ghost Town: A community that lacks both the understanding of the new economy and the leadership and infrastructure to compete in the new economy.

Types of Communities in the Knowledge Age



Source: LaJolla Institute, 1997

The Community College's Leadership Role

Community College As Community Learning Center

The community college can be the center of community learning, a "great, good place" for retrofitting skills, gateway to virtual and distributed learning resources, and learning agent/broker. It does not need to be alone in these endeavors. Community college leadership can foster the formation of Internet-connected learning centers throughout the community—union halls and academic malls, places of worship and places of commerce, medical centers, and centers with mentors. Community college leadership can play a central role in the creation of smart communities.

Forging Strategic Alliances and Partnerships

The community college should be on the point in fashioning strategic alliances with other learning enterprises, both traditional and nontraditional, new learning providers and intermediaries, technology companies, and sources of capital and learners including companies, communities of reflective practice, and community organizations. These alliances can accelerate and leverage the transformation of learning into a responsive and flexible community resource.

The Community College and Economic Development

The truth is out. Becoming a smart community is key to assuring your community's economic development in the Knowledge Age.

Community colleges are critical to providing the community learning pipeline that separates smart communities from others. Earlier economic development theory focused on the importance of research universities. Today's emerging wisdom recognizes the importance of the community college and its roles as community learning center, retrofit center, gateway to virtual learning, and learning broker/agent as engines of economic development.

Community Learning Will Be a Growth Industry

Learning in the Knowledge Age will be a growth industry, not a zero-sum game. Who better than community colleges to be the leaders in creating perpetual, distributed, interactive, collaborative learning experiences tailored to the needs of individuals, businesses large and small, and communities of reflective practitioners? Knowledge Age vision and leadership will determine whether your community reaps the benefits of being a smart community.

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Materials on Smart Communities provided by the LaJolla Institute, an independent nonprofit institution with a focus on attaining a better understanding of the impact of the new economy on organization and communications alike. For more information, visit *http://www.lajollainstitute.org.*

On-Line Insight on Knowledge Age Vision

Do you want to learn how to leverage the forces of transformation on your campus? The Society for College and University Planning (SCUP) has developed a collaboratory on "Making Transformation Work on Your Campus." Visit the Web site at *http://www.udel.edu/scup* to see how your community college can access the latest insights, case studies, and virtual white papers on Knowledge Age transitions.

Are you interested in learning more about Smart Communities? Visit the Web site developed for Urban Land Institute's (ULI) conference on "Shaping a Livable Technopolis" at *http://www.uli.org.*

Can you visualize a mixed use community learning center on your campus? Visit George Mason University's Web site at *http://www.gmu.edu* and proceed to the George Johnson University Center.

About the Sponsor and Authors

About the American Association of Community Colleges

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) is the primary advocacy organization for the nation's 1,100 two-year degree-granting institutions. Organized in 1920, AACC promotes the causes of its member colleges through legislative advocacy; monitoring of national issues and trends; collection, analysis, and dissemination of information; representation with other educational agencies and the national media; and research and publication of news and scholarly analyses. The association is a nonprofit organization located in the National Center for Higher Education in Washington, DC.

More information regarding AACC's programs and events can be obtained from their administrative offices:

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Creating a Knowledge Age Vision for Your Community College

Your community college can be essential to your community's success in the New Economy. Read this book to discover how to:

- Engage Your Entire Campus in Visioning the Future
- Plan from the Future Backward
- Vault the "Misleading Leading Edge" of the Knowledge Age
- Mix Revolutionary Vision with Evolutionary Action
- Create New Academic Cultures
- Chart Assured Migration Paths to the Knowledge Age
- Develop Basic Competencies for the Knowledge Age
- Seize the Unique Opportunities for Community Colleges

"The key is the ability to think in the future tense."

—Jennifer James
Futurist and Author, 1997

"Pursuing incremental improvements while rivals reinvent the industry is like fiddling while Rome burns." *—Gary Hamel*
Professor, Harvard Business School, 1996

"640K ought to be enough for anybody."

—Bill Gates
CEO and Founder of Microsoft, 1981

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